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ABSTRACT

Efforts related to rural development, observed in central Africa, focus on the physical with little concern for social and psychological change. Highly funded programs, including those sponsored by the United States, are providing roads, markets, schools, public buildings, etc., and the lifestyles of the native population reflect these improvements. Often the social impact is negative and development suffers. Irregularities in emphasis produces the greatest single development restraint. A more balanced approach to development which incorporates social and psychological research is needed. A logical sequence of socio-psychological research as applied to development would include: prior to introduction of change stimuli, (1) a benchmark descriptive survey revealing demographic, socio-cultural, and socio-psychological dimensions; and (2) a survey--on a selected regional basis--yielding data pertinent to selection of change methodology; and, during the period of change, (3) semiannual updates of steps 1 and 2; (4) constant efforts to identify developing social problems; (5) periodic assessment regarding achievement of development goals, including analysis of the effectiveness of the diffusion process; (6) regular testing of the change methodology to provide basis for continuing/choosing alternative approaches; and (7) hypotheses testing using the more basic and resource-consuming style of research. (NEC)

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THE NEED FOR SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN DEVELOPMENT

by

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociological Society (48th, Blackburg, VA, August 21-24, 1985).

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Efforts related to development, observed in Central Africa, focus on the physical with little concern for social and psychological change. Highly funded programs (including the U.S.) are providing roads, markets, schools, public buildings etc., and the lifestyles of the native population reflect these improvements. Often the social impact is negative and development suffers. This paper urges a more balanced approach to development and discusses areas of need for both social and psychological research. The author feels that the irregularities in emphasis, realized among projects, produce the greatest single development restraint.

Edward K. Knapp

THE NEED FOR SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN DEVELOPMENT[1]

It seems obvious that rural development[2] would concern people as well as crops, animals, credit, and roads. A review of the impact of development on humans further suggests that every stage of change brings with it a concurrent and pervasive social evolution. Mosher[3] in discussing agricultural development states, "agricultural development is a social product". To then mount a rural development program with reasonable levels of efficiency and expectation of success, it becomes pertinent to have an understanding of the social and psychological concepts bearing on the project. These concern both the individual and group characteristics of the clientele as well as the change agents and decision makers. Most important is knowledge of the basic social structure of the target groups. There appears to be limited literature regarding this dimension of social change in developing countries; however, what has been reported continuously points to the dire results of disregarding the human dimension.

I. THE SEQUENCE OF RESEARCH NEEDS

In the early stages of development the need for social information would appear minimal, i.e., the inputs for fueling change are initially physical - roads, bridges, storage structures, markets. To the degree that the people receive information or are subjected to an educational experience, the efforts are quite directive. The interest is for speed,

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1 Revised and updated 1985. Topic originally presented at "The Social Science Conference on Rural Development", Malawi, Central Africa, 1979.

2 "Development" is taken as change from highly rural agricultural oriented society to increased levels of industrialization, modernization and urbanization.

3 P 12, Mosher, A.T., Getting Agriculture Moving, F. A. Prager, New York, N.Y., 1966.

efficiency and results, i.e., obtaining the largest positive change for a given unit of development input. This leads to prescription rather than explanation! A directive to farmers may simply suggest that maize be planted at onehalf meter spacing. Time does not permit a consideration of the reasoning, and further, the reasons may be quite obvious. It would, of course, be desirable to obtain complete social data prior to the development effort. In particular it would be helpful to be able to project any spin-off effects of the new spacing. In addition to the expected physical change, increased yield could well impact negatively as well as positively on the farm family and the community. In practice such complete social examination is rarely accomplished and in many cases it is probably impossible. Regardless, this paper would urge an increased effort toward this end.

In addition, in the early stages of development, the clientele (mostly farmers) is largely provided guidance on a face-to-face individual basis. Later in a middle period, when development efforts must necessarily deal with more complexity[4], the need to examine the educational approaches and the impacted socio-psychological structure greatly increases. The basics of teaching per se are, of course, well researched and known to change agents. It is the application in a specific development locale that demands an understanding of the relationship of such basics to psychological variance and the social structure.

In this middle period of intensive development a multiplier effect is noted. Attention provided for the solution of one problem causes the generation, or, at least the surfacing of related difficulties. For example, a shift from subsistence farming to cash cropping would require one member of the family to spend time away from home attending to the purchase of supply items and arranging for the marketing. In many parts of Africa this would perhaps be the man as the woman is the dominant field worker. Thus, the absence of the man would thereby increase the

4 For example, the shift to group and mass effort. Obviously it is easier to understand and convince one person than a group.

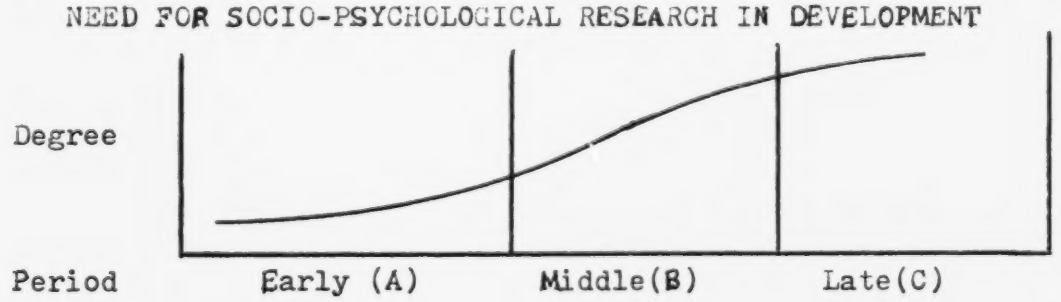
responsibility of the wife for maintaining family cohesion. In highly developed areas (U.S.), the results of male absence are proving highly negative, however, such effect is probably less serious in more primative societies. A common practice in Malawi, and other areas of Africa, is for the male of the family to absent himself for several years to work in the mines of South Africa. He returns with a clothes box, new clothing, blankets, and most important, cash to upgrade and expand the family farm. It would be an interesting research project to examine the family reaction to this period of absence. Certainly the opportunity to earn a substantial amount of cash is a positive effect. The present activities to withdraw funding from South African corporations must have a negative impact among those Africans taking advantage of the work opportunity in the mines.

A final phase of social research need occurs when rural development ultimately effects the transition to the industrialization and urbanization process. At this point, presumably, success is being realized, i.e., success in both appropriate outcomes and methods of achievement. Certainly without substantial reference to the findings of social science research at this point, success would be at least delayed.

In this last period of development there would be a continuing need for social research as has been indicated; however, the human characteristics of the population and the new social structural milieu would be well established. The topics for investigation then would more closely approach those of the developed world.

The sequence of quantitative levels may be illustrated by the following ½ sine wave graph:

NEED FOR SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN DEVELOPMENT



II. TYPES OF SOCIAL RESEARCH NEEDED

Initially in the developing area simple descriptive data and analysis will provide a sufficient guide for providing the social inputs. Demographic information, literacy levels, primary social groupings, and accessibility of clientele are perhaps the major concerns. Social problems will be rather obvious and the solutions available. For example, providing educational opportunity to a villager generally should (in much of Africa) be done with the knowledge and approval of the village headman. It will require a research project to learn the relatedness of the headman's hierarchial position to the program input.

Perhaps there is a health problem requiring an immunization program. Social science questions may include: the appropriate manner in which to assemble the people for injections, a determination of taboo limitations if any, or other blocks; and finally, existing attitudes regarding the reception of nurses in the local community. Again, answers to questions at this level can probably be obtained without resorting to research effort. This initial stage (A on graph p3) will require time to achieve momentum; however, soon additional problems will surface and certainly will be of an increasingly sophisticated nature[5].

The second stage (B) is characterized by a rapidly increasing need, both in quantity and complexity of research. Finally, after development is realized, there will be a continuing need for research related to the urban-industrialized society (C) resulting. At this point, finely stated theory with attendant hypotheses for testing will be the common research form.

It is of course desirable to have research precede the emergence of related problems. Some prior research, particularly of a basic nature will be available - largely findings with a

5 It is assumed that the social science research appropriate to a developing nation is a direct result of the identification of real problems. It is further assumed that the most pertinent research will be of the highly applied short term variety.

cross-cultural potential. However, adaptation to the local culture must necessarily be pursued following the availability of local data. As was previously stated it is frequently impossible to gather any extensive amount of social data prior to the start of development. An obvious reason for this situation is the desire for immediate results on the part of the funding agency.

The sequence of research demand and the general characteristics of pertinent concepts as hypothesized here are not unique to this paper. Others have suggested slightly different statements. For example, in discussing the impact of change[6] it has been suggested that there may be four categories.

"FOUR ANALYTIC CATEGORIES - RESEARCH PROBLEMS AND VARIABLES

1. Descriptive - Conditions, characteristics, situations
2. General Analytic - Changes related to general conditions
3. Specific Analytic - Changes related to specific factors
4. Formal Analytic - Testing hypothesis"

In addition to a descript ion of the research pattern it seems of value to suggest how the sequence may pertain to specific categories within the traditional socio-psychological framework. The following presentation is the author's and may inject a provocative dimension to the discussion:

PERTINENT CATEGORIES OF SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND LIKELY POINT OF INCIDENCE

PHASE	PSYCHOLOGICAL	SOCIOLOGICAL
A	Sense Perception Language, Thinking Problem Solving Human Development	Family, Kinship, Marriage Culture and Society Division of Labor
D	Learning and Memory Efficiency & Learning Motivation	Communication Patterns Social Stratification Social Mobility, Institutions[7]

6 P 201 Cur Changing Rural Society, Iowa State University, Center for Agricultural and Economic Development, H. James, H. Copp Eds., Iowa State University Press, Ames, Iowa, U.S.A 1964

7 Chart continued on next page.

PERTINENT CATEGORIES OF SOCIO- PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND LIKELY POINT OF INCIDENCE (Continued)

PHASE	PSYCHOLOGICAL	SOCIOLOGICAL
B(Cont)	Personality	Organizations, Associations
	Aggressive Behavior	Social Change, Leadership
	Cognitive Dissonance	Socialization
		Group Structure & Function
		Inter-Group Relationships
		Group Norms
C	Emotions	Urbanization
	Frustration	Industrialization
	Intelligence	Bureaucracy
	Deviant Behavior	Collective Behavior
	Abnormalities	Population, Migration

III. APPLICATION OF CHANGE AND POTENTIAL FOR NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

It would seem that social research, both psychological and sociological, of value in development can logically be divided into 1) Problems inherent in the society in question, and 2) Those generated by the impact of change itself. For example an existing societal practice would be the system of succession and inheritance (matrilineal or patrilineal). Prior to the initiation of development, it would be appropriate to ask 1) Will this practice (succession and inheritance) impede the development process? 2) If so, what is the scope of impedimentation? 3) If substantial, how can change be realized without the development of the expected side effects? This inherent factor may be examined in relation to current sociological theory and suitable research topics framed.

Problem 2) above indicates that the impact of change carries with it its own socio-psychological milieu. As has been noted an Extension educational program may fail due to inadequate deference to a person of high position (headman) in a village hierarchy. On an ongoing basis, research may

determine methods of properly involving such local leadership in development decisions, and thereby gain acceptance of change. This example is of an elementary level, however, if improperly handled may still threaten the success of an entire development plan.

An example on a more complex plane may relate to the socio-psychological theory of cognitive dissonance. This is a frequent condition, existing in varying intensities, and accounting for reduced function of members of societies.

"The theory maintains that we have a strong urge to be consistent and rational in our thinking and to preserve agreement and harmony among our beliefs, feelings, and behavior and therefore our attitudes. When there is a lack of consistency and harmony, we experience cognitive dissonance."[8]

The intervention of change in undeveloped areas certainly greatly increases the opportunity for the development of the condition of cognitive dissonance. Specifically, a villager may value the status quo and be looked upon by many as a champion of the existing lifestyle. As change is introduced he may in-part support the cultural alterations. His peers in particular, may see him cast in two separate roles and have conflicting expectations regarding his behavior. His awareness of performing concurrently in disparate roles (restrainer of change and facilitator of change) may develop in him the negative emotional state of cognitive dissonance. A study of the incidence of this condition, emerging as development proceeds, would be fundamental to any process for amelioration.

IV. THE IDEAL SYSTEM

A logical stepwise sequence of socio-psychological research as applied to development would include:

A. Prior to the introduction of change stimuli:

1. a benchmark descriptive survey re demographic socio-cultural and socio-psychological dimensions.

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* P 499, Jerome Kagan and Ernest Havemann, Psychology: An Introduction (3d Ed.) Harcourt Brace Jovanovinch Inc. New York, N.Y., 1976.

2. A survey, on a selected regional basis, to yield data pertinent to the selection of the change methodology.

B. During the period of change:

1. While the rate of change is substantial the efforts described in "A" above should be updated at least 2xs per yr.

2. Constant efforts to identify developing social problems - those with a pre-existing reference and those generated by the change process. Social survey research should provide a vehicle for such a review.

3. Periodic assessment re achievement of development goals. In relation to the agricultural educational phase(Extension), such assessment would be an analysis of the effectiveness of the diffusion process,i.e., to what degree the educational thrust had penetrated from awareness to adoption, and with what proportion of the population?

4. A regular testing of the change methodology to provide a basis for continuing or choosing alternative approaches. In development the change agents are largely supplied by an Extension educational system. The research would then deal with such questions as the relative effectiveness of personal(individual) contact, area meetings, and mass media in educational thrusts designed to impart knowledge, teach skills or change attitudes.

5. A limited treatment of broad theory. This would take the form ~~form~~ of hypotheses testing and tend to the more basic and resource-consuming style of research.

V. THE INVOLVEMENT OF HUMAN SUBJECTS DEMANDS THAT RESEARCH BE "PEOPLE SENSITIVE"

When a crop, animal or machine is damaged there is usually a possibility of repair or replacement. The dimensions of the human animal are such that psychological and sociological breakdowns are difficult and often impossible to repair. Examples are rampant. One has only to look at Ireland and the Near East for confirmation. Human relationships are very fragile. They require expert handling to avoid disasters. When development

is imposed it seems judicious to quickly note the people problems and provide a scientific response.

The theme of this paper has been obvious and simple,i.e., development should proceed with an awareness of social as well as physical change. A BALANCED DEVELOPMENT PRECEEDED AND ACCOMPANIED BY A BALANCED RESEARCH. The author,in his tour in Africa,observed fragmented development as the greatest development limitation. Over the centuries development has occurred without a careful monitoring of the social impact. The result has been concurrent "social pathologies". Note the American Industrial Revolution and a great rise in unreasonable use of child labor! With development proceeding ina more comprehensive way and under proper scrutiny by the funding nations, an opportunity is provided to realize development without the creation of negative social institutions.

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